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THE APPROACHES TO CALIFORNIA

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The paramount interest of California history lies, not in the vicissitudes of settlers in the country, but in the search for a road thither. There neither was nor is any short or easy way of reaching El Dorado; and, from the days of the conqueror of Mexico to the present, the wrecks of lives and reputations have been strewn along the many paths by which men have essayed to reach this land.

In contrast with the coast of California—by which was once designated the whole stretch from Cape San Lucas to Unalaska—the Atlantic seaboard of North America lies open to Europe. To it there was but one line of approach for an expanding western civilization, and the problem of this approach was solved once and for all by Columbus and Cabot. Henceforward the nations—Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, or Dutch—might come, for the way lay open and direct.

To the Pacific Coast, on the other hand, no direct approach was possible. Between western Europe and California there lie, not the oceans merely, but the great land masses of the globe. These obstacles are the primary consideration in her history, which assumes ever new aspects with the opening of new routes. The history of the Spanish period is the record of land expeditions from the south and of hazardous voyages on difficult and uncharted coasts. The short period of Mexican domination witnessed the coming of the Americans from the eastward overland through the wilderness, and of new ventures on the coast by American ships. The conquest in 1846 was but the prelude to the coming of the Argonauts by sea and land, over routes new and old. The conditions created by this mad influx had scarcely been reduced to order when a new chapter was opened with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Such, moreover, is the recognition of the importance of these approaches that, in spreading out the unwritten page for a newer chapter, the people of California are preparing to mark its importance with the frontispiece of a great international pageant.

The history of the one hundred and forty years since the first Europeans settled in California turns thus upon the approaches by which men have reached her shores. Back of this period there lie two and a quarter centuries of similar endeavor so that the entire scope of European activity on the coast is unified by one special interest.

To appreciate the significance of these endeavors it is necessary to disabuse one's mind of the idea, expressed in its accepted form by Bishop Berkeley, that the expansion of the nations follows the path of the setting sun. This is an idea evidently born of the movement across the Atlantic; and is one that could not possibly have originated on the western side of the continent. From the standpoint of the Pacific Ocean the question is not merely of Spaniards and Englishmen crossing the Atlantic Ocean and the American continent, but of Russians making their way eastward across Asia and leaving us a memorial of their ambitions in the name of the Russian River; and, further, of the hitherward overflowing of oriental nations that has created in perpetuity the problem of Asiatic exclusion. When the time comes for a new interpretation of the movements of expansion the old conception of a western line of advance may give place to the idea that civilization, spreading out from an original focus in eastern Asia, after traversing equal distances to the east and to the west, is drawing to a new focus on this spot which is opposite the first but on the other side of the world.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the fact that the earlier explorations of great land masses were, of necessity, made in ships. The world of ancient history was confined to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea; and even today, with all the modern facilities for overland travel, the seaboards of the world are infinitely better known than the inland parts of the continents. Theoretically, in order to reach California from Europe, it was necessary, at the beginning, to pass round either one or other of the two great land masses of the globe. There were thus four possible approaches: the explorer might sail eastward to the north of Europe or to the south of Africa; or he might sail westward to the north or to the south of the American continent. One only of these four has been used as a route to the Pacific Coast, though each of them has in turn been tried. The northern routes are ice-bound, while that

by "The Cape" presents no advantages over the South American route to compensate for the greater length of the voyage it entails. The route by Cape Horn was itself so long and hazardous that the search for an available alternative was eagerly pursued. After centuries of effort the only possible alternative—one first proposed in 1523—is now being made ready by the government of the United States.

The first explorations of the California coast were not dependent, however, on the use of the long sea routes. They were the inevitable sequel to the conquest of Mexico. The efforts of Cortés disclosed no such wonders, however, as had been described by Ordoñez de Montalvo, and can scarcely be called successful from any point of view. The two ships he sent out in 1532 never returned. In 1533 the *Concepción* and *San Lázaro* discovered the extremity of the peninsula, but were otherwise unfortunate. The expedition of 1535, led by Cortés himself, landed at the bay of Santa Cruz, possibly La Paz, but failed in the purpose of establishing a colony. Finally, the expedition under Francisco de Ulloa, in 1539, which was the supreme effort of Cortés, succeeded in exploring the Gulf of California to its head and the outer coast to about the latitude of 28°.

The viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza, next took up the burden of northward exploration. To co-operate with Coronado in the search for the famous Seven Cities of Cibola he sent Hernando d'Alarcón, in 1540, by sea to the head of the gulf. Mendoza had no better fortune than Cortés in discovering fabulous lands and cities, but by his next venture, the expedition under Cabrillo and Ferrelo, in 1542, the California coast was explored to 40° 26′. The return of Ferrelo marks the conclusion of the first period of California exploration—when next the scene opens interests of quite another character are disclosed.

In 1566 Urdaneta crossed the Pacific Ocean from the Philippine Islands to Mexico and demonstrated the practicability of this voyage. The route thus marked out brought the returning galleons to the American coast in the vicinity of Cape Mendocino, and further examination of the coast thus became a matter of necessity. It required, however, the stimulus of Francis Drake to bring the Spanish government to the point of ordering this exploration to be made.

Considering the great extent and complexity of Spanish interests in the old world and the new, it is scarcely just to attribute delay in any one particular undertaking to mere negligence. The difference between the Spanish and English methods of colonizing lay primarily in the fact that while England availed herself of the initiative of her subjects and stepped in to take advantages of their enterprise, Spain insisted that active initiative might come only from the government. Thus it happened on this coast that, time after time, the Spanish crown neglected to take important steps that had been urgently recommended by officials in America, until forced to do so by the energy of the subjects of other powers. Whatever the policy of Spain may have been at any time in regard to the north Pacific Coast, her activities may be traced in practically every instance to the movements of foreigners. Even the explorations of Cortés, inevitable as they would appear, were influenced by his discovery in 1524 that a ship—presumably Portuguese from India—had been wrecked upon the Jalisco coast.

In was the voyage of Drake in 1579, followed by that of Cavendish in 1588, that impelled the Spanish government to act upon the recommendations that had been made for a fuller exploration of the California coast. The position of Spain in regard to the coast might be described by saying that the possession of Mexico gave her the advantage of interior lines of communication. Drake, on the other hand, may be said to have turned the flank of the Spanish position by demonstrating the feasibility of the long detour round South America. The Pacific Ocean was henceforth open to all Europeans, notwithstanding the strategic position occupied by the Spanish power. The attack made by Drake, particularly as it was followed up by Cavendish, was disconcerting, and the more so as it was believed that he had actually found a Northwest passage back to England. Drake was in fact the precursor of Cook in the search for such a passage from the Pacific side, but he returned from his great venture by way of the Cape of Good Hope. Of greatest interest, perhaps, is the fact that his was the first voyage to California made directly from Europe, and, in that sense, he opened the only approach generally available to Europeans for nearly three centuries.

The voyages of Sebastián Vizcaino in 1596 and 1602 were the Spanish reply to these English incursions into the Pacific Ocean.

Vizcaino was directed to search for such a harbor as would be suitable for Philippine ships to visit on the returning voyage from Manila; and to discover, if possible, the strait to the Atlantic. The highest point reached by the second expedition was in the vicinity of Cape Blanco—42° or 43°. The ports of San Diego and Monterey were visited and described, but nearly one hundred and seventy years were to elapse before another Drake could induce the Spanish government to act upon Vizcaino's recommendations.

It was not until the year 1768 that the Spanish authorities took up the subject of colonizing Alta California where it had been dropped in 1603. During this interval some progress had been made towards establishing land routes northward through the peninsula and by way of Pimería Alta. These results were due almost exclusively to the devotion of the Jesuit missionaries—particularly Father Kino. Exploration of the exterior coast there had been none, though the sailing-directions of González Cabrera Bueno, published in Manila in 1734, show a very considerable advance in knowledge. English seamen had touched the coast of Lower California, especially in the earlier years of the eighteenth century—William Dampier (1686, 1704, 1709), Woodes Rogers (1709), George Shelvocke (1721)—but they had been more sincerely interested in the movements of the Manila ships than in making contributions to geographical knowledge.

When the Spanish government awakened ultimately to the need of occupying Upper California the preparations were conducted with so much vigor and determination as to indicate reasons of the utmost urgency for the step. The reasons were, in brief, that other nations were actively engaged in opening up approaches to California. In 1768 the council that determined upon the immediate occupation of San Diego and Monterey founded its opinion in regard to the necessity of this undertaking upon the advances that other nations were making towards this unoccupied territory. The pressure thus exerted came from the four quarters of the globe and California appears as the objective point towards which not only Spain, but England, Russia, France, and Holland were moving. The council referred specifically to the discoveries that had been made eastward by Russia; to the efforts that France had made westward from Canada, and which, since 1763, were being

continued by England; to the search for the Northwest passage conducted by England not only from the Atlantic but from the Pacific Ocean; to the intimate knowledge of the Pacific Coast that had been acquired, on the one hand by Lord Anson, and on the other by the Dutch coming from the East Indies.

The decision having been made, the visitador-general, Don Joseph Gálvez, took charge of despatching the California expedition of which Don Gaspár de Portolá was appointed commander. The force at Portolá's disposal was divided into four parts—two going by land and two by sea. The divisions assembled at San Diego, and, on the 14th of June, set out from that place in search of the port of Monterey. The expedition reached San Francisco Bay in the first days of November, having been unable to identify Monterey from the descriptions of Vizcaino and Gonzalez Cabrera Bueno. It was not, therefore, until the month of June, 1770, that a post was established at the latter port.

The founding of presidios and missions at San Diego and Monterey did not wholly relieve the anxiety of the authorities in Mexico, and, even before the additional explorations of the coast during which Juan Manuel de Ayala sailed the *San Carlos* into San Francisco Bay in 1775, it was considered necessary to send out a ship to investigate the Russian settlements to the north. Accordingly Juan Pérez, in 1774, made a voyage in the *Santiago* to 54° 40′, the southern extremity of Alaska. This was the first of a very notable series of exploring expeditions made with the purpose of validating the Spanish claims to the entire coast. In 1775, Heceta and Bodega; in 1779, Arteaga and Bodega; in 1788, Martínez and Haro; in 1790, Elisa, Fidalgo, and Quimper, commanded ships that reached the Alaska coast. The years 1789 and 1790 were full of activity on account of the Nootka Sound controversy; but before the actual conclusion of the incident, which terminated Spain's interests north of California, Alejandro Malaspina, with the *Descubierta* and *Atrevida,* had visited Nootka in 1791 during his voyage round the world, while Galiano and Valdés, in the *Sutil* and *Mexicana,* made the last, and the best known, of these expeditions in 1792.

As a result of these voyages Spain is entitled to the honor of having made the first explorations of the Pacific Coast as far north, at least, as Queen Charlotte Island. Owing, unfortunately,

to the secrecy of the Spanish government the records of the voyages were not published—in fact have not yet been published—and the names given by the earliest explorers have not been retained. From the point of view of Spanish territorial interests these activities on the Northwest coast can only be regarded as aggressive measures designed to protect the settlements in California from the approach of other powers. In this they were entirely successful—it was not until 1812, when the Spanish power in America was nearing its end, that the Russians founded the colony in California that had been a subject of apprehension to Gálvez in 1768.

Of the four possible approaches to California, two, as I have said, would naturally be sought eastward by the north of Europe and westward by the north of America. The best energies of the seafaring nations have been expended in the search for the Northeast and Northwest passages, and it has only been after demonstration beyond question of their impracticability that the necessity of accepting overland substitutes has been admitted.

As early as 1553, and again in 1580, English ships were sent out to search for a Northeast route to the Pacific Ocean. These were followed by Dutch expeditions in 1594, 1595, and 1596; but, though many attempts were made, the accomplishment of the voyage was reserved for Nordenskjöld in 1879.

The opening of the corresponding land route across Asia was the step preliminary to Russian activities in Northwestern America. The transcontinental advance beyond the Ural Mountains is dated as beginning in 1578, and Okhotsk was reached in 1639, "thus completing the march across the continent of Asia, in its broadest part, in about sixty years." By 1706 the Russians had penetrated to the southern extremity of the peninsula of Kamchatka, and ten years later the Okhotsk Sea was crossed for the first time.

The navigations in which we are more directly interested date from 1728 when, by order of Peter the Great, Vitus Bering explored the eastern extremity of Asia. The second Russian expedition was sent out by the empress Elizabeth. Six years were required to convey the men and materials across Siberia, so that it was June 1741 before Bering and Chirikof sailed from Avatcha Bay. The two vessels composing the expedition soon lost sight of

each other with the result that the continent of America was discovered independently by each ship. Chirikof made land at Bucareli Bay on July 15, while Bering reached the vicinity of Copper River on July 20. The misfortunes and sufferings of the crews were extreme, but while Chirikof succeeded in returning to Kamchatka, Bering died, December 8, 1741, on the island which now bears his name.

The fur trade had led the Russians across Asia, and adventurous spirits were at once attracted by it to the shores of Alaska, so it came about that fur hunters played the same part of explorers and pioneers on these northern coasts as in the western parts of the United States. While it is unnecessary for my present purpose to follow the exploration of the Alaska coast in detail, the secret expedition of Krenitzen and Levashef, in 1768-69, may be mentioned for the reason that it was contemporary with the Spanish expedition that resulted in the settlement of California. As the undertaking had been set on foot by the empress Catherine in 1764 there is no improbability in supposing that information in regard to it had been communicaed to his own government by the Spanish ambassador in St. Petersburg.

There can, it seems to me, be no reasonable doubt that Russia, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, cherished designs of a far-reaching character in regard to the North Pacific Ocean. Her interest was by no means confined to Alaska. Explorations were systematically made on the Asiatic coast as far south as Japan, and on the American coast as far south as Lower California. Under Baranof, one of the most striking figures in American history, two positions were occupied in the Hawaiian Islands, a fortified post was established in California—first at Bodega Head, and later at Fort Ross—and hunting stations were maintained on the Faralones outside San Francisco Bay, and on the islands off Santa Barbara. Whatever projects there were, and Russian commanders of the time in the Pacific speak with confidence, the foothold in California was abandoned in 1841; by 1854 proposals had been made to the United States for the cession of Alaska, and the Russian empire in America came to an end in 1867. Thus the eastward yielded to the westward advance.

The search for the Northwest passage continued from 1497, when John Cabot discovered the entrance to Hudson Strait, until

1907, when Amundsen completed his four years' voyage by sailing into San Francisco Bay. It is an interesting illustration of the view here set forth that the ship in which the navigation of the Northwest passage was finally accomplished now floats upon a pond in Golden Gate Park.

Up to the beginning of the eighteenth century so little had been done towards elucidating the geography of the north and northwest of America that it would be unsuitable, in the present instance, to go into details respecting the earlier explorations. The activity shown by Peter the Great in sending out Bering was not confined to Russia, the commercial ambitions of other European nations, particularly England and France, led, at the same period, to world-wide explorations looking to the development of foreign trade. As one of the great unexplored areas of the globe was the Pacific Ocean, it was inevitable that the search for a Northwest passage would be taken up again with renewed vigor. The new advocate of the quest was Arthur Dobbs, and owing to his persistence three expeditions were sent out before the middle of the century. The Hudson's Bay Company equipped two ships which sailed in 1737 but never returned. The English government detailed two ships in 1741 which did not get beyond the confines of Hudson's Bay. Finally, Dobbs succeeded in raising sufficient money by public subscription to send out two ships more in 1746. One of these Dobbs named the *California,* thus indicating the further object of the undertaking; and it is of interest to know that the scheme for which Dobbs could obtain such generous support contemplated that "if a discovery should be made of this passage, . . . a considerable settlement should be made in California; . . . that settlement should be made the rendezvous for all ships going from or returning to Europe, . . . and should be the head settlement, as Batavia is to the Dutch in India, and from hence the trade might spread to Asia, India, Mexico, and Peru; and from this place the islands in the great South Sea might be discovered, and a commerce be begun with them."

The exploration of the South Sea did not wait upon the charting of a Northwest passage. After Anson's voyage (1740), Byron (1764), Wallis and Carteret (1766), and Captain Cook (1768, 1772, 1776) continued the work he had commenced of exploring the Pacific Ocean—and of alarming the Spanish authorities in

regard to the safety of their possessions. Cook's third voyage was made for the purpose of examining the northwest coast for a passage or strait to the Atlantic; this was not found, but the indirect result of the voyage was the beginning of the fur trade on the northwest coast by English and American ships. The opposition of the Spanish authorities in Mexico to this trade led to the Nootka Sound controversy which gave world-wide prominence to the northwest coast and terminated Spain's claims to sovereignty north of California. Before the Nootka affair had been finally settled between England and Spain the United States had acquired a first footing on the Pacific through the discovery of the Columbia River by Captain Gray on May 11, 1792. The next year, moreover, the continent was crossed for the first time.

The progress of the French across the continent that gave concern to Gálvez and the *junta* of 1768 in the city of Mexico, reached its farthest point west in La Vérendrye's discovery of the Rocky Mountains in January, 1743. Years elapsed, however, before this discovery was followed up, and then it was by English fur traders. In 1769 Samuel Hearne was sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company and before his return in 1772 had reached the Arctic Ocean at the mouth of the Coppermine River. In 1789 Alexander Mackenzie, a member of the Northwest Company, explored to its mouth the river that bears his name; four years later he crossed the Canadian Rockies and reached the Pacific Ocean opposite Queen Charlotte Island on the 22d of July, 1793.

It was not Mackenzie's route, however, but that of Lewis and Clark that proved to be the long-sought substitute for the northwesterly route to California. The line of approach in the latter case was by the Missouri River, which had previously been explored as far as the Mandan nation in North Dakota by the subjects of Spain in Upper Louisiana. Lewis and Clark made the overland journey from St. Louis to the mouth of the Columbia River and return between 1804 and 1806. In reality the American approach to California involves the entire history of the "westward movement" from ocean to ocean. By this expedition, joined with the purchase of Louisiana in 1803, it was advanced to the Pacific Ocean. With the acquisition of Louisiana fur traders and trappers overran the new territory and penetrated again beyond the contiguous Spanish frontier. So by the end of the third de-

cade of the nineteenth century the first beginnings of the overland stream of American immigration appear in California in the persons of Jedediah Smith (1826) and the two Patties (1828).

The contrast between the Spanish and English methods of colonization are nowhere more apparent than in the respective approaches of the Spaniard and American to California. Not so much as an adventurer had penetrated to Alta California from the southward when in 1769, an expedition under the direct auspices of a minister of the crown, led by an officer in the Spanish army, accompanied by friars duly appointed as missionaries, set out for the purpose of establishing a government at Monterey and San Diego. Not until the machinery was installed did the authorities in Mexico turn their attention to promoting settlement.

On the American side a period of conflict with Spanish neighbors across the Mississippi was ended suddenly by the Louisiana purchase. American frontiersmen and traders instantly crossed the river to exploit the new land, and within a quarter of a century had opened paths into every part of it. Where these adventurers led the American government followed—tardily. So in Oregon there arose the curious anomaly of a joint occupancy, while the American settlers in Texas had erected and maintained an independent government before their own extended its protection over them. The American approach to California was begun by individuals making their way there by sea round the Horn and overland across the continent; it was made effective by the establishment of American government in Oregon and Texas. When this had been accomplished it was obvious that a continued hold by Mexico on this territory was strategically impossible.

Nevertheless a great barrier of mountains, chasms, and deserts lay between California and the country east of the Rocky Mountains and it is not at all certain that a Pacific Republic would not have arisen if the railroad had not provided a new approach.

In the long run, however, it has been realized that something more than a railroad is necessary—a country can not be colonized effectively on the basis of the expenditure incidental to transcontinental travel. Hence it is that the discovery of a route by water has lost none of its importance with time. We go back now in the twentieth century to create the route dreamed of in the sixteenth century, and utilized in anticipation, one might say, by

the buccaneers of the seventeenth. The canal at Panama has many justifications but principally is it important, in the eyes of a Californian, because it brings Europe as near as is physically possible to his own shores.

I have now indicated the lines of approach that have been followed by Europeans in reaching the remote coast of California. With the other half of the subject, the lines of approach by which the peoples of Asia have reached the same place, it is not a present intention to speak further than to say that the expansion of oriental nations has more than once brought European civilization to the test, and that the brunt of a great oriental expansion confronts this western outpost of European civilization. It can not be supposed that laws of our own promulgation will of themselves afford us protection when the dense masses of China, for example, discover that the barrier of the ocean is no longer impassable.